

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Most of us know the parents or grandparents we come from. But we go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain we carry the memories of thousands of beings.... We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves."

V. S. Naipaul

"A Way in the World," 1994

Blackledges in America (Second Edition) represents over one hundred combined years of genealogical research by the three compilers, inherited ancestral files from past researchers, and immense quantities of data generously shared by dozens of other zealous compilers pursuing related family lines. It is neither a simple series of "begats" nor a computer-generated list of names, addresses, and phone numbers. Rather, it is a genealogical compilation in which individual accomplishments and family stories are included when provided to the compilers. Sources and conflicting data are identified wherever possible, both to give due credit to other researchers and to aid in further research. The compilers have sought to honor all requests for privacy by currently living individuals, except for data readily available in public records. Inevitably, some data later may be proven to be inaccurate or typographical errors will have escaped the proofreaders' scrutiny. Hopefully, any such flaws will not prevent readers from enjoying this book as much as the compilers have enjoyed its preparation. And so, let us commence our journey back in time.

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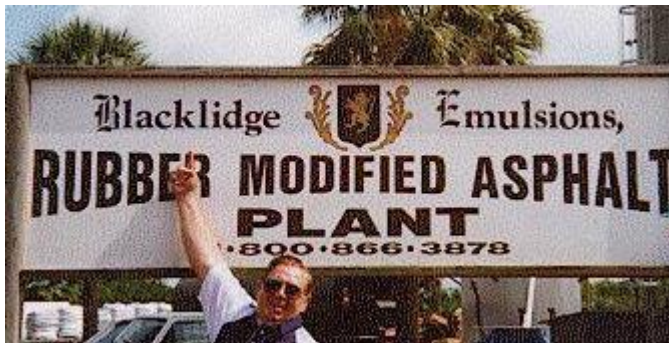
From the 1620 arrival of John Blackleach in Boston¹ to the present, Blackledges and their descendants have participated in every major facet of American history. Blackledges served in local militias protecting the expanding colonial settlements, fought in the War for Independence, War of 1812, on both sides of the Civil War, and in every 20th century call to arms. The Nation's westward expansion can be traced by examining the lives of individuals representing the various roots and branches of Blackledge family trees. Considering the difficulty in maintaining contact and preserving records during the colonial, revolutionary and expansionist eras, it is fortunate that so much is known of the early Blackledges who arrived on these shores during those turbulent times.

Although a relatively small part of the population, Blackledges are in evidence around the nation. Driving east from Hartford, CT, on SR 94, one comes upon signs denoting the **Blackledge River** and nearby **Blackledge Falls**. Referred to as Blackleach's River in 1714, this fourteen-mile stream commemorates the land purchases of John Blackleach, Sr. of nearby



Entrance to the Blackledge Country Club, Hebron, CT

Wethersfield.ⁱⁱ Those so inclined can proceed to play a round of golf at the **Blackledge Country Club** at Hebron, CT. Near Bath, Maine, one can purchase fresh lobsters, live or boiled, at the roadside **Blackledge Lobster Pound**. In New Bern, NC, the **Jiggs and Blackledge Laundry** offers its services. Visitors to Tucson, Arizona, may find themselves on **Blacklidge Drive**. Farther west, **Blackledge Diving**, operating out of Long Beach Harbor, CA, conducts underwater operations globally. In the Northwest, the **Blackledge Furniture Store** has been in Eugene, OR, for over a century. On the highways of Florida and Mississippi are seen large trucks bearing the logo of **Blacklidge Emulsions, Inc.**, a leading asphalt producer with plants in Gulfport, MS and in Pensacola and Tampa, FL. One former place name, **Blackledge Bottom**, IL, became Crossville by the end of the 19th century. Anyone perusing



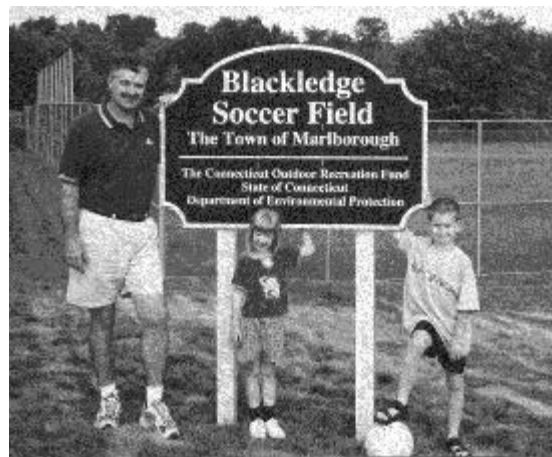
a copy of the 1775 Henry Mouzon map of The Carolinas, used by military strategists on both sides during the American Revolution, will find the colonial **Blacklege** plantation at the confluence of the Neusse and Poteckney Rivers.

The trades and professions represented run the gamut from doctors, educators, clergymen, appointed and elected officials, judges and lawyers, farmers and ranchers, industrialists and small-businessmen, tradesmen and

craftsmen to the new vocations meeting the needs of this rapidly changing technological and electronic era. Leadership skills are evidenced by the number of Blackledges who have risen to the highest positions in their chosen fields as well as in military careers and fraternal organizations.

Today, there are some 1200 Blackledge and 150 Blacklidge families in the United States alone, found in forty-six different states and the District of Columbia, in addition to those found in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and scattered elsewhere throughout the world. Without genealogical records, it is difficult to identify many additional Blackledge women who took their husbands' surnames in marriage.

A River Runs Through It: In CT, the Blackledge River has lent its name to diverse objects from soccer fields (right) to woodwind quintets (logo below).



Purpose and Scope

There have been many prominent bearers of this proud name. However, the primary purpose of this joint endeavor is not to glorify ancestry but, rather, to compile as complete and accurate as currently possible a record of the Blackledge families that can trace the arrival of their ancestors on these shores prior to the 20th century. A few more recently arrived families have been included if at least three generations of data are available. The compilers of the Second Edition have made an effort to research all Blackledges in America. Nevertheless, any genealogical work is by definition incomplete and deserving of additional research. As this document was completed at the beginning of the 21st century, it is hoped that those finding this project useful will be stirred to update their own family records as we have tried to do in gratitude to earlier researchers of the various Blackledge families.

Technological advances make it increasingly possible to research, document and share recorded data. Each of the various Blackledge family branches has its own accounts of its roots, some recorded and others merely told and retold through the generations. Much of this “family history” inevitably is lost or becomes increasingly difficult to verify with each passing generation. In many cases there are conflicting accounts as to ancestry, names, dates and places. When two or more accounts appear credible and no proof has been discovered to resolve the discrepancy, the authors have elected to include conflicting versions rather than risk losing a fact that may be proved in the future.

Derivation of the Name

Not only have there been conflicting accounts of the “correct” spelling of the name, even its origins have been subject to dispute. Most sources agree that the name derives from the early English Black-Lake (Lache) and signifies a dweller born or holding property at such a locally known locale. Two such locales have been identified in early England, a pond still existing on Lindow Common in Wilmslow, East Cheshire,ⁱⁱⁱ and the other one no longer existent near Leyland in Lancashire. Families of that name or its various derivatives were found in both locales as early as the 13th century. (See *Chapter 2*) Over forty variations of the surname spelling have been identified, with the most common in England being Blackledge, Blackelache, Blacklache, Blackleech, Blackleeche and Blacklidge. Some sources also believe that Blacklock is one of its variants.

By the 1600s the name generally had evolved into Blackleach in both England and the colonies. It continued to evolve into today’s Blackledge or Blacklidge variants by the 1700s. First names and surnames frequently were spelled in two or more variants in the same 17th, 18th or 19th century documents even when it is certain that the same person or immediate relative is being identified.^{iv} Many of these discrepancies undoubtedly resulted from scribes attempting to record what names sounded like to them. The Blackleach spelling still could be found in the United States as late as in the 1860 Indiana Census. Even in the 20th century some family members have chosen to convert either to Blackledge or to Blacklidge, from personal preference or to coincide with the recorded spelling in an historical or legal document. Thus, it is not possible to conclude that all Blacklidges are more closely related than Blackledges, or vice versa.

In this Second Edition, the compilers introduce a new chapter in which is presented information collected on African-American Blackledge families. Two families may trace their lines back to the same slaveholder without assuming blood kinship since some freedmen at the time of Emancipation retained the hapenstance surname link to their past.

Family Crest



While several commercial purveyors offer various “Blackledge coats of arms,” most properly include a disclaimer of any genealogical representation. Coats of arms do not belong to a family name and even crests are not considered legally inheritable.^v It is known that John Blackleach, Sr. who settled in the colonies about 1630 used the family crest (see photo at left), used by Nicholas Blackleech, Doctor of Phisick to King Henry VIII. While no heraldic rights can be assumed, many of the Blackledges claiming descent from that illustrious gentleman proudly display this tie to their roots.

As will be explained in the following chapter, viz. “*The English Connection*,” the coat of arms bears six sable and gold horizontal stripes, a falcon crest, and the motto “*Lux et Perseverantia*” (by light and perseverance).

How to Use This Book

Most of the chapters are presented as descendanty reports from the earliest known primary ancestors. The ‘Modified Register’ descendanty numbering system is used. Under the accepted format for such reports, the progenitor, or “original” ancestor is assigned a numerical index of 1, and each child a sequentially increasing number. Thus the progenitor’s first born would have index 2, and so on. Spouses are not assigned numbers, as they are not descendants of the progenitor. Here is an example entry in the book, which happens to be from Chapter 5 *William Blackledge and Descendants*:

3729. **Estella Adelia "Stella" BLACKLEDGE**^{905,1281} was born on 31 Oct 1915 in MI.^{692,905} She died on 18 Jul 1948.⁹⁰⁵

Estella Adelia "Stella" BLACKLEDGE and PERRY married.¹²⁷⁹ **PERRY**. Estella Adelia "Stella" BLACKLEDGE

and PERRY had the following children:

- +5171 i. **Lonnie PERRY**, married Dorothy¹²⁷⁹.
- 5172 ii. **Elaine PERRY**¹²⁷⁹.
- +5173 iii. **Whilden PERRY**, married Carol¹²⁷⁹.

In this example, Stella BLACKLEDGE is a descendant numbered 3,729 from William, who is numbered 1 in that Chapter. Stella's numbered paragraph 3729 provides what we know of Stella. The next paragraph provides information on her marriage, followed by summary paragraphs on her three children. Those children are also descendants, and have been assigned descendant numbers: 5171, 5172, 5173. The plus sign (+) in front of 5171 and 5173 indicates that it is known that these descendants married or had children. Information on that relationship, and any other information known about each descendant, will be found under their own paragraphs in the next generation later in the same chapter and numbered 5171. and 5173., respectively. Apparently nothing more is known about Elaine; in particular, no marriage event is known for Elaine, so there will be no paragraph 5172. in Chapter 5. However, it is known she existed, and was the second child of this marriage. The superscript 1279 indicates that existence is based on evidence from Source #1279 for this chapter, which will be listed at the conclusion of the chapter.

Since many individuals were listed with different spellings of their names, the variation found in official records or which seem to be the one most likely used by the immediate family (e.g., on tombstones) was chosen for this work. The chosen format for descendant information allows for spouse's parents' names only. The authors have included a text box at the end of the descendant's report to provide additional information on the lineage of the spouse when known, thusly:

Sarah Philpot: Information on Parents

William PHILPOT died about 1749. He was a currier. His wife **Mary** died in 1750.
Sources: Will of William Philpott of Bristol, Philadelphia Co, PA, dated 25 Aug 1740 and proved 21 April 1749, Will Book J, p. 104. Will for Mary Philpot, widow, of Philadelphia, PA, made 15 May 1750 and proved 1 Oct 1750, Will Book J., p. 309.

In a few instances, information was received by the compilers after the Modified Register numbers for the book had already been generated. In such cases, a note will indicate that no descendant number has been assigned.

Within a chapter, the individual is referred to by their bracketed descendant number. Thus within Chapter 5, we would refer to our example Stella Blackledge as [3729]; outside of Chapter 5, we would give the chapter reference as well, so Stella would be [5:3729]. Since spouses of descendants have no number, they are usually referenced via the number of the descendant they married, e.g., Stella's husband PERRY would be [sp:5:3729].

How This Book is Organized

Each of the chapters following this Chapter 1, *Introduction*, consists for the most part of descendancy reports from the earliest known primary ancestors.

Chapter 2, "*The English Connection*," provides information on some of the early English Blackledges recorded in history. This includes Bishop Huan Blackleach who reputedly was born at Blackelache Hall, Leyland, Lancashire County, England and died in 1510. Being a rather prolific lot, space precludes the inclusion of every person discovered to be bearing the Blackledge name, or its many variants, unless

traced from a believed descendant in America and in a family of at least three generations known to the compilers.



Lightning crackled over Tucson, AZ, illuminating **Blacklidge Drive** [inset] in this award winning photograph by Francisco Medina from the front page of the San Diego Union Tribune, 5 Aug 2000. Reprint by permission.



Chapter 3 provides information on the three Blackleach families known to have settled in the American colonies. First is John Blackleach, Sr. who apparently was the grandson of William Blackleach of London and used the same family crest. John may have arrived in New England as early as 1620 and was prominent in New England from 1630 until his death in 1683. While several American Blackledges

claim to have descended from one of his twelve known children, a scarcity of verifiable records coincides with the evolution of the Blackleach name to the Blackledge/Blacklidge variants about the end of the 17th century. The second family is that of Richard Blackleach, Sr. whose relationship, if any, to John Blackleach, Sr. has yet to be proved. Richard is known to have been in Connecticut in 1676 and his descendants continued to use the Blackleach spelling until at least the mid-18th century. Finally presented is the line of another Richard Blackleach whose daughter Elizabeth is known to have died in 1744. This line is traced through her offspring, the Burritt family. Further research may link all three lines.

Chapters 4 and 5 present two prominent lines that have sufficient data to trace their American roots back to the 17th century. Those tracing their ancestry to the above John Blackleach, Sr. may find ancestral links in Chapter 4, “*Phillip Blacklidg and Descendants.*” Known to have been at Port Royal, Jamaica, on 7 July 1692, Philip appears in the American colonies by early 1700. Ichabod Blackledge, the Revolutionary War veteran born in New Jersey in 1745, was his grandson. Many of Ichabod’s line spell their name with an “i” and many of them believe that his grandfather was a descendant of John Blackleach, Sr. Others believe that Ichabod’s grandfather, while of English descent, was a native of Holland and that a relationship to that earlier colonist has yet to be verified.

Chapter 5, “*William Blackledge and Descendants,*” begins with William’s arrival in Philadelphia about 1682, and follows the branches of his many descendants as they extended across the Country. The index will be particularly helpful in locating individuals to be found among this largest known group of related Blackledges in America.

Chapter 6 provides information on Zachariah Blackledge, who was born in South Carolina in 1767, and his descendants. It is possible that he, too, eventually may be linked as a descendant or relation of John Blackleach, Sr. The promise and challenge of genetic genealogy is discussed in the chapter closing.

The seventh chapter provides information on Blackledge families in the United States, with at least three generations of known data, not presently linked to those listed in the previous chapters. The authors recognize that other families meeting the criteria undoubtedly exist as well as data which could provide linkage between various lines. Hopefully, readers aware of additional families and missing data not only will find this chapter useful but also will be encouraged to share their data with others interested in Blackledge genealogy.

As mentioned earlier, the eighth chapter provides information collected on African-American Blackledge families. In many cases these African-American Blackledges chose to retain the surname associated with the involuntary servitude of their forebears.

The amount of data available, indeed even the number of Blackledge descendants in the United States proved to be far larger than envisioned by the compilers. The compilers sought to obtain information as well on Blackledges in America but not in the United States. Many families in Canada and in the United States find their historic roots have extended across the border from the era of colonization and conflicting loyalties to today’s era of ever increasing economic ties. Marriages and shared heritages have made the border virtually nonexistent for genealogists.

The Appendix, *Blackledge Miscellany*, contains some sidebar stories of general interest.

Throughout the book, descendant notes have been merged with the vital record information, and the numbered source references are collected at the end of each chapter. A single global index concludes the document.

Abbreviations and Glossary

Several conventions are applied consistently throughout this book. First, the standard U.S. Postal Service two character abbreviations for states are used throughout for locations, e.g., **IN** for Indiana. An exception to this is when the spelling of a state appears in a reference or in a title, e.g., “*Indiana Marriages Through 1850*. Indiana State Library Genealogy Division.” Secondly, dates are represented in the form: **16 Jun 2002**. Note that only the first three letters are used to represent the month, e.g., **Jun** for June. Again the reader will note exceptions when the full spelling of the month is part of a title or a quoted document such as a will. Additionally, the reader should expect to find **Co** [with no period, to prevent confusion with the abbreviation for Company] used for County, and **Twp** for Township. Finally, surnames are presented in all caps, and when a (first or last) name or a fact is missing, the reader may infer that it is unknown to the compilers.

A collection of other abbreviations used from time to time in the book is provided in the following table:

b.	born		abt	about
c.	circa		aka	also known as
d.	died		dtd	dated
Jr.	Junior		J.P.	Justice of the Peace
Sr.	Senior		MM	Monthly Meeting (Quaker)
sect	section		twp	township

A few uncommon land measurement terms will be found in the text; here is the definition of those used most often:

perch *Chiefly British.* **a.** A linear measure equal to 5.50 yards or 16.5 feet; a rod. **b.** One square rod of land.

sect *abbreviation for section:* A land unit equal to one square mile (2.59 square kilometers), 640 acres, or 1/36 of a township.

twp *abbreviation for township:* **a.** A subdivision of a county in most northeast and Midwest U.S. states. **b.** A public land surveying unit of 36 sections or 36 square miles.

Sources for Chapter 1

ⁱ Banks, Charles Edward. *Topographical Dictionary of 2885 English Immigrants*, Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing Co., 1957, p. 100.

ⁱⁱ Hughes, Arthur. *Connecticut Place Names*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bardsley, Charles W., M.A. Worcester Coll., Oxford, Late Vicar of Ulverston, Lancs., *A dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames with Special American Instances*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1901.

^{iv} The famous 16th-century Flemish painters, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and his two sons, Pieter Breughel the Younger and Jan Brueghel the Elder, each spelled their surnames differently. *New York Times*, p. B1, 31 Mar 1998.

^v *Heraldry & Genealogy*, Allen County, IN, Public Library, Genealogy Department.